

"To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which inhere in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

# The Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin

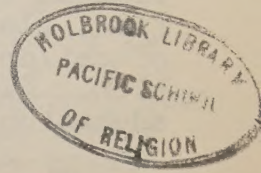
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## ROUGH ROADS TO A NEW DESTINY\*

by I. W. Moomaw



In one sense we are living in a world that is becoming increasingly small, and increasingly one. We measure travel time to distant points of the earth in hours. Major news events are known in central Africa almost as quickly as we hear them.

### 1. MANY WORLDS

But to speak with more precision, we live not in a small world, but in a very large world. There is not one but many worlds. While we may have shortened the distance between points on the surface of the earth, we have still to narrow the ideological and political gulf that separates east and west. Our technical accomplishments have greatly increased our physical power, they have not lessened the fear that haunts men day and night.

We have come to the end of colonialism. At the turn of this century, almost every field, hill and valley of Asia and Africa was controlled by the white man. Sixteen new, independent countries have been formed within the past 12 years. Nationalism naturally follows the withdrawal of colonial governments. Pent up feelings of resentment burst forth. National pride often shows a spirit of impatience. New countries realize that they arrived on the world scene late. They feel the necessity for accomplishing in a very few years their goals of education, housing, literacy, agricultural reform, and economic development.

### 2. ARE THEY "UNDER DEVELOPED" COUNTRIES?

We speak of countries that have recently gained their independence as "underdeveloped." That is hardly correct. Egypt had a high form of civilization long before America was discovered. Before the birth of Christ, India had rich forms of art, handicrafts, and architecture

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\* An address before the Church and Community Workshop, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, in July, 1959.



as well as certain sciences like astronomy. Today the forests of such countries are gone, top soil is to a large degree eroded away. So, in a true sense, these must be regarded as redeveloping countries. The task of redevelopment will be extremely difficult.

Take education. Prior to independence, only about 20% of the children of Ghana were in school; today, after only a two year period, approximately 70% are registered in school. Naturally, they have very limited facilities and must make do with teachers who are poorly qualified. In India for many years, prior to independence, the proportion of children in school was not keeping pace with the growth of population. Since independence came in the year 1947, India has faced an educational task of dimensions few of us are able to comprehend.

The redeveloping countries need to industrialize and mechanize at the same time. While India is producing greater amounts of cloth than ever before, relatively fewer people are employed in weaving. Formerly, cloth was woven by hand. Now, with the coming of industry, the work is done by power looms. This causes unemployed people to back up on the land. Even though India's industry has moved ahead relatively rapidly during the past decade, the proportion of people today depending on the land for a livelihood is greater than it was before independence.

In the United States we are quite fortunate with 3 acres of relatively new crop land per person. Japan and Egypt have only 0.2 of an acre per person. In Korea there is 0.5 of an acre of rather badly eroded land per family; India has 0.7 of an acre. In Kenya, center of the Mau Mau movement, we found as many as 1,020 people per square mile of rather badly eroded soil.

Today, land has become a major concern to nearly a billion rural people in the world. As population increases the fierce struggle for land begins; men vie with each other for plots to till. The people of nearly 40 different countries are today struggling for land reform.

We speak freely of this as The Space Age or The Nuclear Age. And it is. But, also, this is the Age of the hungry and homeless. Never in history have so many been without adequate food or homes. Recently among refugee settlements of India, Pakistan and the middle east we met hundreds of young people 10 to 12 years of age whose only life has been the shack of the refugee family and the day to day allocations of food to keep body and soul together. We tend to overlook mass hunger. Starving men make no noise.

Here is our vast surplus of wheat, cotton, and other basic food commodities. Other countries like Canada, Denmark, and Australia have such surpluses as well. We seem to have been unable to discover ways for marketing these useful products so that the needy peoples of the world can buy them and at the same time save us from the costly embarrassment of holding them. SURELY AN AGE THAT CAN PLAN EXPEDITIONS TO OTHER PLANETS OF THE UNIVERSE SHOULD IN SOME WAY OR OTHER BE ABLE



TO DEVISE MEANS FOR MARKETING IN AN ORDERLY, BUSINESS-LIKE MANNER SHIPLOADS OF SURPLUS FOOD TO NEEDY REGIONS OF THE WORLD AND PURCHASING SOME OF THE COMMODITIES THEY WOULD HAVE TO SELL IN RETURN.

Several years ago I was a member of a district development committee in western India. We tried to devise ways for helping the gin owners market 100 thousand bales of cotton. That seemed like a stupendous task, and it was. However, about 2:30 one morning I awoke, lit my kerosene lantern and went to my desk. There I calculated what would happen to that surplus cotton if it could be made available in the form of cloth to the dispossessed peoples of western India who had produced it. I began calculating, not in terms of any luxury, but only in terms of a spare shirt and loin cloth to each man and boy, a spare sari to each woman and girl, and for each a plain white sheet on which to sleep instead of the bare ground or the burlap shreds they normally use. I ran out of cotton before getting 50 miles from home.

The population of the world has increased 12 per cent during the past decade, while food production has increased only 9 per cent. Africa, once considered an abundant land of potential plenty, is now one of the chief potential hunger areas of the world.

This group realizes the threat that Communism poses and the convulsive changes that it brings to the regions it enters with governmental strength. The Communist still uses the whip of "colonialism" to beat the West, and sometimes quite effectively. The Soviet government has learned that world conquest by Communism is a goal not easily realized. But they have not given up such hope. The millions in mass poverty, hearing their rosy promises, feel that they have nothing to lose; they might even gain.

### 3. THE ROLE OF THE MINISTER

In trying to speak objectively, I have presented a picture that must appear gloomy indeed. What of the future? I shall try to deal with our reasons for Hope as a factor in human destiny.

First, there is the productive power of the soil. God has built into the soil almost limitless power to produce. In each cubic inch of moist fertile garden soil He places  $2\frac{1}{2}$  billion minute organisms—as many little organisms as there are people in the world. The soil is a living thing, and sacred. A few years ago, walking across the Ganges Valley of North India with a young agriculturist I asked how long he thought the soil there has been producing grain crops, wheat and millet. He calculated slowly and said about 3,500 years; since 1500 B.C. Century after



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century this soil has been tilled and brought forth moderate crops. On a recent trip through England, I went to the historic experimental farm at Rothamstead to see a special plot on which they have been keeping records since the year 1845. Here they have been applying improved seed using rotation, fertilizers, manures and the best methods of husbandry. During the period of 115 years, the average annual yield has come up from 17 to 47 bushels per acre.

Second is the hope planted in the hearts of millions of common people who toil eagerly for a better way of life. They are weary of usury, want and landlordism. They believe something can and must be done. Their revolution is peaceful. Their requests are moderate; not political power nor luxury; merely the necessities of life that God has promised to all.

#### 4. THE ROLE OF THE MINISTER

Perhaps the greatest contribution ministers and teachers can make is in helping to provide an informed Christian opinion. God has not willed that any should starve. The American farmer is not happy to see the crops for which he toils become burdensome surpluses. He wishes to have a part in feeding the world. The world's food is a technical and a spiritual problem of the highest order. If we can achieve a political break-through and let the finest insights of business and economics have full play, these problems can be solved forthwith. That, of course, calls for an informed Christian opinion.

Again, the churches can do much toward making technical help available to neglected regions of the world. The Gospel of Christ when expressed in practical, tangible ways is our most potent force to lift and heal all areas of life. In the year 1950 we counted only 92 full-time missionaries working in agriculture and home economics. Today there are approximately 240, with the number steadily increasing.

It is for us to live at a time when the flood gates of history have been opened. Fateful decisions have to be made as we are confronted by new frontiers of faith. We can meet the future with hysteria, and as hirelings of greed and soft comfort. This could well mean the dark night of the soul for this generation. Or, we can seek and find a new vision of God's mature purpose for mankind and let him reveal to us the new destiny toward which he would lead us, and the price we must pay.

We have drifted too long in the false assumption that science alone can save us. We must rediscover a new sense of spiritual destiny realizing that only in that way can technical advances be truly useful. The task of the rural churches during the years ahead will be difficult, but rewarding to those who pay the price in studying and self-discipline in order to become, helmsmen under God doing their small part in steering mankind to a new destiny and a brighter tomorrow.